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cuting the work as may be useful in laying out roads, and in the measurement of towns. The preparation of this work, requiring considerable labor and judgment, devolves upon Dr. Palfrey, the Secretary of State.

ART. VII.—1. *Contributions to the Edinburgh Review.*

By FRANCIS JEFFREY, now one of the Judges of the Court of Sessions in Scotland. London: Longman & Co. 4 vols. 8vo.

2. Wiley & Putnam's *Library of Choice Reading: Characters of Shakspeare.* By WILLIAM HAZLITT. New York. 16mo.
3. *Imagination and Fancy.* By LEIGH HUNT. New York: Wiley & Putnam. 16mo.

THE British Reviews and reviewers of the early part of the present century are closely connected with the history of English literature, not only on account of the influence they exerted on public opinion, but for the valuable contributions which a few of them made to literature itself. Some of the most masterly disquisitions in the whole range of English letters have appeared in the three leading periodicals of the time, — the “Edinburgh Review,” the “Quarterly Review,” and “Blackwood’s Magazine.” Almost all systems of philosophy, theology, politics, and criticism have been vehemently discussed in their pages. They have been the organs through which many of the subtlest and strongest intellects have communicated with their age. In generalization, in classifying historical events under ideas and principles, in tracing out the laws which give pertinence to seemingly confused facts, in presenting intellectual and historical epochs in condensed pictures, they have been especially successful. But although containing papers of the greatest merit, their general tone has been too much that of the partisan. Being political as well as literary journals, their judgments of authors have often been determined by considerations independent of literary merit. In criticism, they have repeatedly violated the plainest principles of taste,

morality, and benevolence. Their dictatorial “we” has been assumed by some of the most unprincipled hacks that ever lifted their hoofs against genius and virtue. Though they did good in assisting to purge literature of much mediocrity and stupidity, it is questionable whether their criticism on contemporaries was not, on the whole, productive of evil. The rage for strong writing, which the success of their example brought into fashion, at one time threatened to destroy all discriminating criticism. An article was more effective by being spiced with sarcasm and personalities, and the supply was equal to the demand. The greatest poets of the day found themselves at the mercy of anonymous writers, whose arrogance was generally equalled only by their malice or ignorance, and by whom a brilliant libel was considered superior to the fairest *critique*.

It is impossible to look over the current criticism of that day, and observe the meanness and injustice which so often characterize it, without a movement of indignation. This is mingled with surprise, when we discover in it traces of the hand of some distinguished man of talent, who has lent himself to do the dirty work of faction or prejudice. The great poets of the period were compelled to suffer, not merely from attacks on their writings, but from all that malice could bring against their personal character, and all that party hostility could bring against their notions of government. It was unfortunate, that the same century in which an important revolution occurred in the spirit and character of poetry was likewise that in which political rancor raged and foamed almost to madness. The exasperated passions growing out of the political dissensions of the time, which continually brought opposite opinions in a rude shock against each other, and turned almost every impressible spirit into a heated partisan, gave a peculiar character of vindictiveness to literary judgments. The critics, being politicians, were prone to decide upon the excellence of a poet’s images, or a rhetorician’s style, by the opinion he entertained of Mr. Pitt and the French Revolution. The same journal, which could see nothing but blasphemy and licentiousness in the poetry of Shelley, could find matter for inexpressible delight in the poetry of John Wilson Croker. Criticism, in many instances, was the mere vehicle of malignity and impudence. Whigs libelled Tory writers, Tories anathematized Whigs.

Eminence in letters was to be obtained only by men gifted with strong powers of endurance or resistance. The moment a person became prominent in the public eye, he was considered a proper object of public contempt or derision. As soon as his head appeared above the mass, he was certain that some journal would deem him worthy of being made the butt of merciless satire or scandalous personalities. Every party and *clique* had its organ of "public" opinion ; and, in disseminating its peculiar prejudices or notions, exhibited a plentiful lack of justice and decorum. The coarseness and brutality which party spirit thus engendered brought down the moral qualifications of the critic to a low standard. Every literary bully, who was expert in the trade of intellectual assassination, could easily find employment both for his cowardice and his cruelty. The public looked admiringly on, month after month, as these redoubtable torturers in the Inquisition of letters stretched some bard on the rack, and insulted his agonies with their impish glee. If the author denied, in meek or indignant tones, the justice of the punishment, the reply which they sometimes condescended to make was in the spirit of the taunt with which the judges in "The Cenci," mocked the faltering falsehoods of their tortured victim :—

"Dare you, with lips yet white from the rack's kiss,
Speak false ? Is it so soft a questioner,
That you can bandy lover's talk with it,
Till it wind out your life and soul?"

From this insolence and vindictiveness few British periodicals have been free, though there are wide differences in the ability and learning of the contributors, and in the artistical form which their bad qualities have taken. No eminent man, of any party, has escaped criticism of the kind we have noticed,—criticism having its origin in the desire to pamper a depraved taste, in envy, and hatred, and political bigotry,—a criticism which considered the publication of a book merely as an occasion to slander its author. Insignificance was the only shield from defamation.

But perhaps the authors of the time suffered less vexation from those critical strictures directly traceable to malevolence and political fanaticism, than from those which were dictated under a lack of sympathy with the spirit of their works. There can hardly be a more exquisite torture de-

vised for a sensitive man of genius, than to have the merit of his compositions tested by canons of taste which he expressly repudiates, or dogmatically judged by one who cannot comprehend the qualities which constitute their originality and peculiar excellence. If the critic has the larger audience of the two, and his decisions are echoed as oracular by the mob of readers, the thing becomes doubly provoking. The personal feelings of the poet are outraged, and his writings are, for the time, prevented from exerting that influence which legitimately belongs to them. As an earnest man, conceiving that he has a message of some import to deliver to the world, he must consider his critic as doing injury to society, as well as to himself. This impression is apt to engender a morbid egotism, which makes him impatient even of just censure, and to render the gulf between him and the public wider and more impassable. Much of the narrowness and captiousness, which we observe in ludicrous connection with some of the noblest thoughts and most exalted imaginations of the poets of the present century, had their source in the stings which vindictive or flippant reviewers had planted in their minds. Thus unjust or ignorant criticism subverts the purpose it proposes to accomplish, and makes the author suspicious of its capacity to detect faults, where it is so plainly incompetent to apprehend beauties. Besides, though it seems to annihilate its object, its effect is but transitory. That silent gathering of thought and sentiment in the minds of large bodies of people, which, when it has assumed distinct shape, we call public opinion, reverses the dicta of self-constituted literary tribunals ; indeed, it changes the tone of the tribunals themselves. In 1816, the “*Edinburgh Review*” assumes an attitude of petulant dictatorship to Wordsworth, and begins a *critique* on “*The Excursion*” with, “*This will never do*” ; in 1831, it prefaces an objection to one characteristic trait of his descriptions of nature with the words, “*In spite of the reverence we feel for the genius of Mr. Wordsworth*” !

Among the essayists and reviewers of the time, Francis Jeffrey occupies a prominent position. He was one of the projectors of the “*Edinburgh Review*,” — the earliest, ablest, and most influential of the periodicals of the nineteenth century, — and from 1803 to 1829 its editor. A selection from his contributions, occupying four octavo

volumes, has been lately published under his own superintendence. These evince a mind of versatile talents and acquirements, confident in its own capacity, and delivering unhesitating judgments on all matters relating to politics, literature, and life, without the slightest self-distrust. It would be useless to deny, that many of the opinions in these volumes are unsound and presumptuous, that they are far in the rear of the critical judgments of the present day, and that some of their most dogmatic decisions have been reversed in the journal where they originally appeared,— some by himself, but more by Macaulay, Carlyle, Hazlitt, and others. The influence of very few of his articles has been permanent. Written for the most part to serve a transitory purpose, and deficient in fixed and central principles, their influence has ceased with the controversies they excited. With a few exceptions, they will be read rather for the merits of their style and the peculiar individuality they embody, than for any additions they have made to thought or knowledge. When we consider that their author assumed to show the poets and thinkers of a whole generation how to write and to think, and that he has not left behind him a single critical principle connected with his name, his pretensions are placed in a disadvantageous contrast with his powers.

A prominent defect of Jeffrey's literary criticism arose from his lack of earnestness,— that earnestness which comes, not merely from the assent of the understanding to a proposition, but from the deep convictions of a man's whole nature. He is consequently ingenious and plausible, rather than profound,— a man of expedients, rather than of ideas and principles. In too many of his articles, he appears like an advocate, careless of the truth, or skeptical as to its existence or possibility of being reached, and only desirous to make out as good a case for his own assumed position as will puzzle or unsettle the understandings of his hearers. His logical capacity is shown in acute special pleading, in sophistical glosses, more than in fair argument. He is almost always a reasoner on the surface, and the moment he begins to argue, the reader instinctively puts his understanding on guard, with the expectation of the ingenious fallacies that are to come. He cannot handle universal principles, founded in the nature of things, and he

would not, if he could ; for his object is victory rather than truth. When a proposition is presented to his mind, his inquiry is not whether it be true or false, but what can be said in its favor or against it. The skeptical and refining nature of his understanding, leading him to look at things merely as subjects for argument, and the mockery and *persiflage* of manner which such a habit of mind induces, made him a most provoking adversary to a man who viewed things in a more profound and earnest manner.

As an effect of this absence of earnestness, and of the consequent devotion of his faculties to the mere attainment of immediate objects, we may mention his subordination of principle to tact, both in his own writings and in his management of the *Review*. There is no critic more slippery, none who can shift his position so nimbly, or who avoids the consequences of a blunder with such brilliant dexterity. He understood to perfection the art of so mingling praise and blame, that, while the spirit and effect of the *critique* was to represent its object as little better than a dunce, its mere letter was consistent with a more favorable view. Thus, while it was the fashion to underrate and ridicule any class of poets, there was none who could do it with more consummate skill than Jeffrey, — none who could gain more reputation for sense and acumen in the position he assumed ; but whenever public feeling changed, he could still refer to his course, and prove that he had always acknowledged the extraordinary gifts of his victims, and only ridiculed or mourned their misdirection. He thus made his writings oracular among all talkers about taste and letters, among all who felt and thought superficially. He was popular with them, not because he gave them deeper principles by which to judge of merit, but because he reconciled them to their own shallowness. The lazy and the superficial, who consider every thing as nonsense which they have not the sense to perceive, are especially gratified with the writer who confirms their own impressions by plausible arguments, and expresses them in brilliant language. Profound and earnest feeling, sentiments of awe, wonder, and reverence, a mind trained to habits of contemplation on man and the universe, were needed in the critic who would do justice to Wordsworth and Coleridge. These Jeffrey did not possess ; but instead he had a subtle understanding, considera-

ble quickness of apprehension, sensibility, and fancy, a great deal of wit, a most remarkable fluency of expression, and, with little insight beyond the surface of things, an acute perception of their practical and conventional relations. In the exercise of these powers on their appropriate subjects, he appears to great advantage. No one could demolish a dunce more effectively, or represent in clearer light the follies and crimes of knavish politicians. But when he came to discuss the merits of works of high and refined imagination, or to criticize sentiments lying deeper than those which usually appear in actual life, he did little more than express brilliant absurdities. It is here that we discover his lack of power to perceive the thing he ridicules ; and accordingly his wit only beats the air.

In saying this we are by no means insensible to the charm of Jeffrey's wit, nor to the facile grace of his diction. The reviews of Wordsworth's different works are masterpieces of impertinence. The airiness and vivacity of expression, the easy arrogance of manner, the cool and provoking dogmatism, the insulting tone of fairness, the admirable adaptation of the sarcasm to tease and irritate its object, the subordination of the praise of particular passages to the sweeping condemnation passed on the whole poem, and the singular skill with which the loftiest imaginations are represented as commonplace or nonsensical, are good examples of Jeffrey's acuteness and wit. Of "The Excursion" he remarks :—

"It is longer, weaker, and tamer, than any of Mr. Wordsworth's other productions ; with less boldness of originality, and less even of that extreme simplicity and lowness of tone which wavered so prettily, in the Lyrical Ballads, between silliness and pathos. We have imitations of Cowper, and even of Milton, here, engrafted on the natural drawl of the Lakers,— and all diluted into harmony by that profuse and irrepressible wordiness which deluges all the blank verse of this school of poetry, and lubricates and weakens the whole structure of their style."

Then the critic informs us, that, if he were to describe the volume very shortly, he should characterize it

"as a tissue of *moral and devotional ravings*, in which innumerable changes are rung upon a very few simple and familiar ideas ;— but with such an accompaniment of long words,

long sentences, and unwieldy phrases — and such a hubbub of strained raptures and fantastic sublimities, that it is often difficult for the most skilful and attentive student to obtain a glimpse of the author's meaning — and altogether impossible for an ordinary reader to conjecture what he is about. The fact accordingly is, that in this production he is more obscure than a Pindaric poet of the seventeenth century ; and more verbose 'than even himself of yore' ; while the wilfulness with which he persists in choosing his examples of intellectual dignity and tenderness exclusively from the lowest ranks of society, will be sufficiently apparent from the circumstance of his having thought fit to make his chief prolocutor in this poetical dialogue, the chief advocate of Providence and Virtue, an *old Scotch Pedler* — retired indeed from business — but still rambling about in his former haunts, and gossiping among his old customers without his pack on his shoulders. The other persons of the drama are, a retired military chaplain, who has grown half an atheist and half a misanthrope — the wife of an unprosperous weaver — a servant-girl with her natural child — a parish pauper, and one or two other personages of equal rank and dignity."

After condemning some of the most splendid, and some feeble, passages in the poem, and extracting a few which are thought really beautiful or pathetic, this honest critic concludes thus : —

" The absurdity in this case, we think, is palpable and glaring ; but it is exactly of the same nature with that which infects the whole substance of the work — a puerile ambition of singularity engrafted on an unlucky predilection for truisms ; and an affected passion for simplicity and humble life, most awkwardly combined with a taste for mystical refinements, and all the gorgeousness of obscure phraseology. His taste for simplicity is evinced by sprinkling up and down his interminable declamations a few descriptions of baby-houses, and of old hats with wet brims ; and his amiable partiality for humble life, by assuring us that a wordy rhetorician, who talks about Thebes, and allegorizes all the heathen mythology, was once a pedler — and making him break in upon his magnificent orations with two or three awkward notices of something that he had seen when selling winter raiment about the country — or of the changes in the state of society, which had almost annihilated his former calling."

In the review of the " White Doe of Rylstone," Jeffrey

is even more emphatic in his censures. He had given up Wordsworth, on the appearance of "The Excursion," as beyond the reach of his teachings ; and accordingly, in this article, he merely libels and parodies his poem. We are told that,

"In the Lyrical Ballads, he was exhibited, on the whole, in a vein of very pretty deliration ; but in the poem before us he appears in a state of low and maudlin imbecility, which would not have misbecome Master Silence himself, in the close of a social day. The seventh and last canto contains the history of the desolated Emily and her faithful doe ; but so very discreetly and cautiously written, that we will engage that the most tender-hearted reader shall peruse it without the least risk of any excessive emotion. The poor lady runs about indeed for some years in a very disconsolate way, in a worsted gown and flannel night-cap : But at last the old white doe finds her out, and takes again to following her — whereupon Mr. Wordsworth breaks out into this fine and natural rapture," &c., &c.

The importance which should attach to criticism like this may be estimated by a short contrast of the character and pursuits of the poet and critic ; Wordsworth, living amid the most magnificent scenery, impressed with a mysterious sense of the spiritualities of things, pure, high-minded, imaginative, contemplative, earnest ; — Jeffrey, passing his life in the bustle of politics and courts of law, brisk, vivacious, plausible, sarcastic, practical, available. Was ever poet matched with critic so well calculated to discern excellences, so capable of correcting faults ?

In his articles on the poetry of Crabbe, Campbell, Byron, Scott, Moore, Keats, Rogers, and Mrs. Hemans, although we think he has not always perceived their highest merits, or accurately estimated their relative position, Jeffrey still appears to considerable advantage. The happy facility of his expression, the neatness and precision of his thinking, his occasional glow of feeling and fancy, and his sly, stinging wit, make them very fascinating compositions. But we see nothing in them that indicates the highest taste, — nothing that gives evidence of profound feeling or thought. They are kept studiously within the tone of "good society." Though vigorous and brilliant, they rather sparkle than burn, and have little of the living energy of earnest feel-

ing. Though Jeffrey evidently felt contempt for the taste of Wordsworth and Coleridge, none of his articles on poetry can be compared, in point of true insight into critical principles, with their prefaces and essays on the same theme. But these articles still have a charm apart from their critical value ; and we have no doubt that they will long be read for their shrewdness and point, and their peculiar sweetness and grace of diction. The practical remarks are always acute, and evince uncommon power of distinct expression. The review of Moore's "Lalla Rookh"—a work just calculated to display his qualities of mind and manner in their best light—is full of fancy and observation, conveyed in a style of exuberant richness. There is one sentence which well illustrates the richness and ease of expression which he had so readily at command.

"There are passages," he says, "and those neither few nor brief, over which the very Genius of Poetry seems to have breathed his richest enchantment,—where the melody of the verse and the beauty of the images conspire so harmoniously with the force and tenderness of the emotion, that the whole is blended into one deep and bright stream of sweetness and feeling, along which the spirit of the reader is borne passively away, *through long reaches of delight.*"

The passage on Shakspeare, in the review of Hazlitt, is another instance of his sweetness and luxuriance of diction. Though it is well known, we cannot resist the inclination to quote it.

"In the exposition of these is room enough for originality,—and more room than Mr. Hazlitt has yet filled. In many points, however, he has acquitted himself excellently ;—partly in the development of the principal characters with which Shakspeare has peopled the fancies of all English readers—but principally, we think, in the delicate sensibility with which he has traced, and the natural eloquence with which he has pointed out their familiarity with beautiful forms and images—that eternal recurrence to what is sweet or majestic in the simple aspects of nature—that indestructible love of flowers and odors, and dews and clear waters, and soft airs and sounds, and bright skies, and woodland solitudes, and moonlight bowers, which are the material elements of poetry—and that fine sense of their undefinable relation to mental emotion, which is its essence and vivifying soul—and which, in the midst of Shakspeare's most busy

and atrocious scenes, falls like gleams of sunshine on rocks and ruins — contrasting with all that is rugged and repulsive, and reminding us of the existence of purer and brighter elements — which he alone has poured out from the richness of his own mind, without effort or restraint, and contrived to intermingle with the play of all the passions and the vulgar course of this world's affairs, without deserting for an instant the proper business of the scene, or appearing to pause or digress from love of ornament or need of repose ; — he alone, who, when the object requires it, is always keen, and worldly, and practical — and who yet, without changing his hand, or stopping his course, scatters around him, as he goes, all sounds and shapes of sweetness — and conjures up landscapes of immortal fragrance and freshness, and peoples them with spirits of glorious aspect and attractive grace — and is a thousand times more full of fancy and imagery, and splendor, than those who, for the sake of such qualities, have shrunk back from the delineation of character or passion, and declined the discussion of human duties and cares. More full of wisdom, and ridicule, and sagacity, than all the moralists and satirists in existence — he is more wild, airy, and inventive, and more pathetic and fantastic, than all the poets of all regions and ages of the world — and has all those elements so happily mixed up in him, and bears his high faculties so temperately, that the most severe reader cannot complain of him for want of strength or of reason — nor the most sensitive for defect of ornament or ingenuity. Every thing in him is in unmeasured abundance, and unequalled perfection — but every thing so balanced and kept in subordination, as not to jostle, or disturb, or take the place of another. The most exquisite poetical conceptions, images, and descriptions, are given with such brevity, and introduced with such skill, as merely to adorn, without loading, the sense they accompany. Although his sails are purple and perfumed, and his prow of beaten gold, they waft him on his voyage, not less but more rapidly and directly than if they had been composed of baser materials. All his excellences, like those of Nature herself, are thrown out together ; and, instead of interfering with, support and recommend each other. His flowers are not tied up in garlands, nor his fruits crushed into baskets — but spring living from the soil, in all the dew and freshness of youth ; while the graceful foliage in which they lurk, and the ample branches, the rough and vigorous stem, and the wide-spreading roots on which they depend, are present along with them, and share, in their places, the equal care of their creator.”

Every reader will appreciate the voluble beauty of this loving description ; and passages almost equal to it, in richness and melody, are not infrequently found in the multifarious *critiques* of the author. The elaborate disquisition on Beauty, though founded on a mistaken theory, is written with a grace and unstudied ease, which cannot fail to interest and charm. We could not, without trespassing beyond our limits, enter into a discussion to test the force of its reasoning or the pertinence of its illustrations ; but we think that no poet, who ever created new beauty, could subscribe to Jeffrey's theory without doing violence to his nature. By making beauty dependent on the association of external things with the ordinary emotions and affections of our nature, by denying its existence, both as an inward sense and as an outward reality, he substantially annihilates it. His theory of "agreeable sensations" would find but little toleration from any whose souls had ever been awed before the presence of the highest beauty which the mind can recognize. Jeffrey has not made out his case even from his own point of view ; and a reader, who carefully follows the ingenious twists and turns of his argument, finds that the theory is radically superficial, or continually supposes the very principles it aims to reason away. He misconceives the nature and processes of the imagination, or rather, in the dazzling fence of his rhetoric, imagination is used more as a meaningless word, than as that power which,

" Like to the fabled Cytherea's zone,
Binding all things with beauty,"

is not only the bond which unites the soul with external objects, and gives the feeling and sense of beauty, but likewise suggests a loveliness grander than both, compared with which all finite beauty is insignificant. The contempt with which he refers to a "rapturous Platonic doctrine as to the existence of a Supreme Good and Beauty, and of a certain internal sense, by which both beauty and moral merit are distinguished," shows that his consciousness had never been disturbed by a class of phenomena vitally important to a settlement of the question he discusses. Carlyle, in an article in the Edinburgh Review, published in 1829, entitled "Signs of the Times," quietly sneers at the editor's whole theory, we believe, without condescending to expend any

argument upon it. The same writer has contradicted Jeffrey's estimate of Burns, of Goethe, and of German literature generally, in the Edinburgh Review, with the most provoking coolness.

Perhaps the ablest and most interesting contributions of Jeffrey to the Review were those in which he portrayed the characters of eminent authors and politicians, such as his articles on Swift, Warburton, Burns, Franklin, Alfieri, Mackintosh, Curran, Richardson, and Cowper. The impeachment of Swift of high crimes and misdemeanours, before the bar of history, is a masterpiece of its kind, and has obtained deserved celebrity. The vices of his character are exposed with tremendous force, and considered as an argument drawn simply from the actions of the man, the article is conclusive. But even in this able and powerful paper the deficiencies of Jeffrey are still apparent. In delineating character, he did it from the "skin inwards, and not from the heart outwards." His own character was the test he ever applied. He had not imagination enough to identify himself with another, and look at things from his point of view. Thus, all the palliations which bad or questionable actions might receive from original temperament or mental disease were not taken into consideration; but the individual was judged from an antagonist position, according to the very letter which killeth. This is the mode of the advocate, rather than of the critic. In the case of Swift, the feeling that the article excites against the man is one of unmitigated detestation. A more profound knowledge of his internal character might have modified the harshness of this feeling with one of commiseration. A similar remark is applicable to the judgment expressed of Burns. As regards Warburton, however, we think Jeffrey was essentially right. Nothing can be finer than the castigation he gives the insolent and vindictive bishop, at the same time that he acknowledges his talents and erudition.

Jeffrey's political articles are very spirited compositions, full of information and ability, displaying an admirable practical intellect and talent for affairs, and great command over the weapons both of logic and sarcasm. The course of the Edinburgh Review, in opposing with courage and skill the numerous political crimes and corruptions of the day, and the vigor with which it scourged tyranny and its apologists, though too often alloyed by wilful injustice to authors who

happened to be classed with the Tory party, will always be remembered in its favor. The part which the editor took in the political warfare of the time was honorable to his talents and his integrity. Though the extreme practical view he takes of government and freedom is not always to our taste, and though we could have wished that he possessed a more hopeful faith in human nature, and principles deeper grounded in right and less modified by expediency, it would be unjust to deny his claim to be considered among the most prominent of those who, in small minorities and with the whole influence of the government against them, warred for years, with inflexible zeal, to overthrow great abuses, and remove pestilent prejudices.

The critical and historical essays, contributed to the Edinburgh Review by Thomas Babington Macaulay, have obtained a wide celebrity. Compared with Jeffrey, he may be said to have more earnestness, industry, learning, energy of feeling, more intellectual and moral hardihood, and a wider range of argumentation, but less grace, ease, subtilty, and sweetness. There are few writers more purely masculine, more free from all feminine fastidiousness of taste and sentiment, more richly endowed with the qualities of a hard and robust manhood, than Macaulay. His diction and style of thinking indicate physical as well as mental strength, and a contemptuous impatience of all weak emotions. He never commits himself on any subject until he has fully mastered it, and then he writes like a person who neither expects nor gives quarter, — who shows no mercy for the errors of others, because he cares not to have any shown to his own. Though a good analyst, his chief strength lies in generalization. He would hardly condescend, like Jeffrey, to pause and play with the details of a subject, or fritter away his acuteness in petty refinements ; but he always aims to grasp general principles. He has one power that Jeffrey lacks, — the capacity to learn from other minds. Accustomed to look before and after, to view a literary or a political revolution in its connection with general history, his taste is comprehensive in the sense of not being fettered by conventional rules. He has considerable rectitude of intellect, and a desire to ascertain the truth of things. His literary criticism refers to the great elements or the prominent characteristic of an author's mind, not to the minutiae of his rhetoric or his

superficial beauties and faults. With Jeffrey, the reverse is often true. His wit and acuteness are so continually exercised in detecting and caricaturing small defects, that the result of his representation is to magnify the faults of his author into characteristics, and to consider his excellences as exceptions to the general rule. Macaulay, by taking a higher point of view, by his willingness to receive instruction as well as to administer advice, contrives to give more effect to his censures of faults, by keeping them in strict subordination to his warm acknowledgment of merits. The skill with which he does this entitles him to high praise as an artist. He has attempted to delineate a large number of eminent men of action and speculation, many of whose characters present a seemingly tangled web of virtues and crimes ; and he has been almost always successful in preserving the keeping of character, and the relation which different qualities bear to each other. Milton, Hampden, Johnson, Bunyan, Chatham, Walpole, Byron, Addison, Shelley, Clive, Hastings, Frederic the Great, Bacon, and Barrère, are admirable illustrations of his felicity of delineation. He places himself in the position of the man whose character and actions he judges, seizes upon his leading traits of mind and disposition, and ascertains the relation borne to them by his other powers and feelings. As his object is to represent his subject pictorially to the imagination, as well as analytically to the understanding, and at all events to stamp a correct portrait on the mind of the reader, he sometimes epigrammatically exaggerates leading traits, in order that the complexity of the character may not prevent the perception of its individuality. This epigrammatic manner has often been censured as a fault, — in some instances justly censured ; but we think that his use of it often evinces as much wisdom as wit ; for his object is to convey the truth more vividly, by suggesting it through the medium of a brilliant exaggeration. No person is such a fool as to give the epigram a literal interpretation ; and all must acknowledge, that at times it is an arrow of light, sent directly into the heart of the matter under discussion.

There is probably no writer living, who can hold up a great criminal to infamy with such terrible force of invective and sarcasm as Macaulay. Scattered over his essays, we find references to men and events that have become immor-

tal through their criminality ; and he has allowed few such occasions to pass without a flash of scorn or an outbreak of fiery indignation. All instances of bigotry, meanness, selfishness, and cruelty, especially if they are overlaid with sophistical defences, he opposes with a force of reason and energy of passion, which render them as ridiculous as they are infamous. He is especially severe against those panders to tyranny, who attempt to reason base actions into respectability, and to give guilt the character of wisdom. He crushes all such opponents with a kind of merciless strength. Even when his view of a person is on the whole favorable, he never defends any crime he commits. This is the case in the most difficult and delicate task he ever undertook, — the character and actions of Warren Hastings. No one can be more severe than he on Mr. Gleig, the worthy biographer and apologist of Hastings. Every instance of oppression and cruelty which comes under his notice he condemns with the utmost indignation ; but in summing up the character, he balances great crimes against great difficulties and strong temptations. The reader is at liberty to take an opposite view, and, indeed, is supplied with the materials of an impartial moral judgment. In truth, Macaulay's admiration of great intellectual powers and talent for administration is preserved amid all the detestation he feels for the crimes by which they may be accompanied. This is the amount of his toleration for Warren Hastings. In the case of Barrère, however, he had to do with a man as mean in intellect as he was fiendlike in disposition ; and his delineation of him is masterly. The skill with which the essential littleness of the man is kept in view amid all the greatness of his crimes, the mingled contempt and horror which his actions inspire, and the felicity with which his cruelty is always associated with his cowardice and baseness, are in Macaulay's finest manner.

We have introduced this notice of Macaulay rather to illustrate the objection to Jeffrey, than from any hope or intention to give his various writings a strict review ; and we accordingly pass to another eminent essayist and critic, Sir James Mackintosh. His miscellaneous compositions are now in the course of publication in London. He is known as the author of various political, literary, and philosophical articles in the Edinburgh Review. It would be

difficult to mention any writer, whose name has been connected with the literary journals of the nineteenth century, who has carried into the task of criticism so much fairness and moderation as Mackintosh. His nature was singularly free from asperity and dogmatism ; to a large understanding, and boundless stores of knowledge, he united candor, and even humility, in their employment. His mind was eminently judicial. From the character of his intellectual powers, and the moral qualities from which they received their direction, it was natural for him to look at things with an impartial desire to arrive at truth, and to view both sides of every question. The very fact, that his opinions on any subject were decided, induced him to examine the claims of adverse opinions with the more care and candor, rather than to dispose of them with contempt or bitterness. He had no intellectual pride, no love for principles simply because they were his by discovery or adoption. His mind was always open to new truth. As far as his perceptions extended, he ever did full and complete justice to all systems of philosophy or legislation which came under his notice. He was incapable of misrepresenting a personal enemy or a political opponent. We have sometimes thought, that an argument for the Whig party of Great Britain might be built on the simple fact, that their general principles and conduct were warmly approved by a man of so much comprehensiveness of heart and understanding, and so much freedom from partisanship, as Sir James Mackintosh.

The intellectual and moral character of this eminent man are so closely connected, that it is difficult to view them separately. We do not think his works are fair and full exponents of his nature ; and his reputation was always justly greater for what he was, than for what he performed, valuable as were most of his performances. His friends and associates were among the greatest intellects of his time, and he was respected and venerated by them all. His name always carried with it a moral influence ; and wherever heard, it was always associated with sound and weighty views of philosophy, with liberal principles of government, with learning, humanity, justice, and freedom. His influence was great, although it was not so palpable as that of many among his contemporaries ; and it will be permanent. A man of so much uprightness and virtue, placed in such a prominent po-

sition, and mingling daily with his contemporaries as a practical statesman and philosopher, could not fail to wield unconsciously great power over the opinions and actions of his generation ; and the beauty of his character will long continue to exert an influence, in insensibly moulding the minds of scholars and statesmen, and giving a humane and moral direction to their powers.

Among the critical essays contributed by Mackintosh to the Edinburgh Review, the most distinguished are his two articles on Dugald Stewart's review of the "Progress of Ethical, Metaphysical, and Political Science." These are eminently characteristic of his mind and character, being remarkable rather for largeness of view than strength of grasp, and free altogether from the fanaticism of system. The sketches of Aquinas, Bacon, Descartes, Hobbes, Locke, Boyle, Leibnitz, Machiavel, Montaigne, Grotius, Puffendorf, Barrow, and Jeremy Taylor, abound in profound remark, and often in delicate criticism. The different thinkers who pass before him for review he treats with admirable fairness, and sets forth their leading principles in a clear light. Though the style is elegant and condensed, it is at times languid, as if it paused in its movement with the pauses of the writer's judgment, or its pace was retarded by the mass of thought and erudition it conveyed. Occasionally it becomes a little verbose, from the introduction of words to restrain the full force of general epithets, or to indicate minute distinctions. A large number of striking thoughts might be quoted from these articles. They can be read again and again with pleasure and instruction. The weight, solidity, and coolness of understanding, of which Mackintosh's disquisitions give so marked an example, remind the reader more of the judicial minds of the old English prose writers, than of the pugnacious and partisan intellects of the moderns. They lack the fire both of passion and prejudice ; but their mingled gravity and sweetness of feeling, and amplitude of comprehension, will always preserve their interest. His miscellaneous essays and reviews, when collected, will occupy, we think, a permanent place in the higher literature of the generation of thinkers to which he belongs.

The various disquisitions of Sir William Hamilton seem to have attracted but little attention on this side of the Atlantic, from the fact that they deal with subjects somewhat

removed from popular taste and popular apprehension ; yet it would be difficult to name any contributions to a Review, which display such a despotic command of all the resources of logic and metaphysics, as his articles in the Edinburgh Review on Cousin, Dr. Brown, and Bishop Whately. Apart from their scientific value, they should be read as specimens of intellectual power. They evince more intense strength of understanding than any other writings of the age ; and in the blended merits of their logic, rhetoric, and learning, they may challenge comparison with the best works of any British metaphysicians. He seems to have read every writer, ancient and modern, on logic and metaphysics, and is conversant with every philosophical theory, from the lowest form of materialism to the most abstract development of idealism ; and yet his learning is not so remarkable as the thorough manner in which he has digested it, and the perfect command he has of all its stores. Every thing that he comprehends, no matter how abstruse, he comprehends with the utmost clearness, and employs with the most consummate skill. He is altogether the best trained reasoner on abstract subjects of his time. He is a most terrible adversary, because his logic is unalloyed by an atom of passion or prejudice ; and nothing is more merciless than the intellect. No fallacy, or sophism, or half-proof, can escape his analysis, and he is pitiless in its exposure. His method is to strike directly at his object, and he accomplishes it in a few stern, brief sentences. His path is over the wreck of opinions which he demolishes as he goes. After he has decided a question, it seems to be at rest for ever, for his rigorous logic leaves no room for controversy. He will not allow his adversary a single loophole for escape. He forces him back from one position to another, or trips up his most ingenious reasonings, and leaves him at the end naked and defenceless, mournfully gathering up the scattered fragments of his once symmetrical system. The article on “Cousin’s Course of Philosophy,” and that on “Reid and Brown,” are grand examples of this gladiatorial exercise of intellectual power.

Hamilton is not only a great logician, but a great rhetorician. His matter is arranged with the utmost art ; his style is a model of philosophical clearness, conciseness, and energy. Every word is in its right place, has a precise scientific meaning, can stand the severest tests of analysis, and bears

but one interpretation. He is as impregnable in his terms as in his argument ; and with all the hard accuracy of his language, the movement of his style is as rapid, and sometimes as brilliant, as that of Macaulay. It seems to drag on the mind of the student by pure force. The key to a whole philosophical system is often given in a single emphatic sentence, and its stern compression has sometimes the effect of epigram, — as when he condenses the results of the Scotch philosophy into these few words : — “ It proved that intelligence *supposed* principles, which, as the *conditions* of its activity, could not be the *results* of its operation ; and that the mind contained notions, which, as primitive, necessary, and universal, were not to be explained as generalizations from the contingent and particular, about which alone our external experience was conversant. The phenomena of mind were thus distinguished from the phenomena of matter, and if the impossibility of materialism were not demonstrated, there was, at least, demonstrated the impossibility of its proof.” The mastery of his subject, which Hamilton possesses, the perfect order with which his thoughts are arranged in his mind, and his exact knowledge of terms free him altogether from that comparative vassalage to words, which so often confuses the understandings of metaphysicians. His style has the hard brilliancy of polished steel ; its lustre comes from its strength and compactness.

Among his contributions to the Edinburgh Review, besides those already enumerated, are the articles on the “ Universities of England,” on “ Recent Publications on Logical Science,” and on “ Johnson’s Translation of Tenneman’s History of Philosophy.” The most pleasing to the general reader would be the article on Cousin, although that on the Philosophy of Perception displays to greater advantage his immense stores of metaphysical learning and his intensity of thought. None of his articles have ever been answered. Indeed, on logical principles, they are probably unanswerable. The disquisition on Cousin, which comprehends not only a review of his philosophy, but a consideration of the whole ground of Rationalism, and a course of argument directed against all philosophical theories of the Infinite, is admirably calculated for the present state of speculation in this country, however unpalatable may be its doctrines. He takes the position, that our knowledge is restricted

within the domain of the finite,— that we have no immediate knowledge of things, but only of their phenomena,— and that, in every attempt to fix the absolute as a positive in knowledge, “the absolute, like the water in the sieves of the Danaides, has always hitherto run through as a negative into the abyss of nothing.” As a specimen of the style, we extract his statement of the opinions “which may be entertained regarding the unconditioned as an immediate object of knowledge and thought.”

“These opinions may be reduced to four: — 1. The unconditioned is incognizable and inconceivable ; its notion being only negative of the conditioned, which last can alone be positively known or conceived. 2. It is not an object of knowledge ; but its notion, as a regulative principle of the mind itself, is more than a mere negation of the conditioned. 3. It is cognizable, but not conceivable ; it can be known by sinking back into identity with the absolute, but is incomprehensible by consciousness and reflection, which are only of the relative and the different. 4. It is cognizable and conceivable by consciousness and reflection, under relation, difference, and plurality.

“The first of these opinions we regard as true ; the second is held by Kant ; the third by Schelling ; and the last by our author.

“1. In our opinion, the mind can conceive, and consequently can know, only the *limited*, and the *conditionally limited*. The unconditionally unlimited, or the *infinite*, the unconditionally limited, or the *absolute*, cannot positively be construed to the mind ; they can be conceived at all only by a thinking away, or abstraction, of those very conditions under which thought itself is realized ; consequently, the notion of the unconditioned is only negative,— negative of the conceivable itself. For example, on the one hand, we can positively conceive neither an absolute whole, that is, a whole so great, that we cannot also conceive it as a relative part of a still greater whole ; nor an absolute part, that is, a part so small, that we cannot also conceive it as a relative whole, divisible into smaller parts. On the other hand, we cannot positively represent to the mind an infinite whole, for this could only be done by the infinite synthesis in thought of finite wholes, which would itself require an infinite time for its accomplishment ; nor, for the same reason, can we follow out in thought an infinite divisibility of parts. The result is the same, whether we apply the process to limitation in space, in time, or in degree. The unconditional negation and the unconditional affirmation of

limitation — in other words, the *infinite* and the *absolute*, *properly so called** — are thus equally inconceivable to us.

“ As the conditionally limited (which we may briefly call the conditioned) is thus the only object of knowledge and of positive thought — thought necessarily supposes conditions ; to think is therefore to condition, and conditional limitation is the fundamental law of the possibility of thought. How, indeed, it could ever be doubted that thought is only of the conditioned, may well be deemed a matter of the profoundest admiration. Thought cannot transcend consciousness ; consciousness is only possible under the antithesis of a subject and object of thought, known only in correlation and mutually limiting each other ; while, independently of this, all we know either of subject or object, either of mind or matter, is only a knowledge in each of the particular, of the different, of the modified, of the phenomenal. We admit that the consequence of this doctrine is, that philosophy, if viewed as more than a science of the conditioned, is impossible. Departing from the particular, we admit that we can never, in our highest generalizations, rise above the finite ; that our knowledge, whether of mind or matter, can be nothing more than a knowledge of the relative manifestations of an existence which, in itself, it is our highest wisdom to recognize as beyond the reach of philosophy : — *Cognoscendo ignorari, et ignorando cognosci.*”

A collection of Sir William Hamilton’s articles, as far as they are generally known, might easily be contained in a moderately sized volume, and we trust it will soon be made. Such a book could not fail to be successful, even in the publisher’s notion of that word ; and it would familiarize the minds of our students with far more rigorous habits of thinking and investigation than are now in vogue. Three or four of the ablest of these papers have already been translated into French, and published in a single volume at Paris.

William Gifford, the editor of the Quarterly Review, seems to have united in himself all the bad qualities of the criticism of his time. He was fierce, dogmatic, bigoted, libellous, and unsympathizing. Whatever may have been

* “ It is proper to observe, that though we are of opinion that the terms Infinite and Absolute, and Unconditioned, ought not to be confounded, and accurately distinguish them in the statement of our own view ; yet, in speaking of the doctrines of those by whom they are indifferently employed, we have not thought it necessary, or rather we have found it impossible, to adhere to the distinction.”

his talents, they were exquisitely unfitted for his position, his literary judgments being contemptible, where any sense of beauty was required, and principally distinguished for malice and word-picking. The bitter and snarling spirit with which he commented on the excellence he could not appreciate, the extreme narrowness and shallowness of his taste, the labored blackguardism in which he was wont to indulge, under the impression that it was satire, his detestable habit of carrying his political hatreds into literary criticism, his gross personal attacks on Hunt, Hazlitt, and others, who might happen to profess less illiberal principles than his own, made him a dangerous and disagreeable adversary, and one of the worst critics of modern times. Through his position as the editor of an influential journal, his enmity acquired an importance due neither to his talents nor his character. His notoriety was coextensive with his malignity ; his fame consisted in having the power to wound better men than himself ; and consequently, from being a terror and scourge, he has now passed into oblivion, or is only occasionally rescued from it to be an object of wondering contempt. As far as his influence in the management of the Review extended, it was employed to serve the meanest and dirtiest ends of his party, and the exploded principles of a past literary taste ; and it was owing to no fault of his, that the journal did not become a synonyme of malignant dulness and ferocious illiberality, and feed to the full the vulgar appetite for defamation. Nothing but the occasional contributions of eminent writers and scholars prevented it from sinking to the dead level of his intellect and prejudices. The blindness which partisan warfare produces, even in men of education and courtesy, could alone have permitted the organ of a great party to be under the management of this critical Dennis, this political Quilp. His acumen was shown in his profound appreciation of works which died as soon as puffed, and in his insensibility to those whose fame was destined to begin with his oblivion ; and his statesmanship, in the low abuse of individuals, in a resolute defence of the rotten parts of Toryism, and in assiduous libels on foreign countries. It is to him, we presume, that we are indebted for the lies and blunders about the United States, for which the Quarterly was once distinguished.

To Gifford for a time belonged the equivocal fame of killing John Keats ; but we are glad that a disclosure of the facts

has lately robbed him of this laurel of slander. It is quite a satisfaction to know, that even the tenderest and most sensitive of poets was beyond the reach of his envenomed arrows. Shelley, in a monody on the death of Keats, — then supposed to have been accelerated by the brutal article in the Quarterly, — has, in a strain of invective hot from his heart, fixed a brand on Gifford's brow, which may keep it above the waters of oblivion for some years to come.

“ Live thou, whose infamy is not thy fame !
 Live ! fear no heavier chastisement from me,
 Thou noteless blot on a remembered name !
 But be thyself, and know thyself to be !
 And ever at thy season be thou free
 To spill the venom, when thy fangs o'erflow :
 Remorse and Self-contempt shall cling to thee ;
 Hot Shame shall burn upon thy secret brow,
 And like a beaten hound tremble thou shalt — as now.

“ Nor let us weep that our delight is fled
 Far from these carrion-kites that scream below ;
 He wakes or sleeps with the enduring dead ;
 Thou canst not soar where he is sitting now. —
 Dust to the dust ! but the pure spirit shall flow
 Back to the burning fountain whence it came,
 A portion of the Eternal, which must glow
 Through time and change, unquenchably the same,
 Whilst thy cold embers choke the sordid hearth of shame.”

The various critical writings of William Hazlitt are laden with original and striking thoughts, and indicate an intellect strong and intense, but somewhat narrowed by prejudice and personal feeling. His works are now in the course of publication in “ Wiley and Putnam's Library of Choice Reading,” a collection of cheap and elegant volumes, published periodically, having for its object to supplant a bad “ cheap literature ” by placing a good one by its side. Whatever is read by large bodies of people becomes from that fact important, no matter how intrinsically worthless it may be ; and yet there is a strange apathy existing with regard to a class of poisonous publications, which obtain in a week a greater circulation than the most popular valuable books meet in years, are read at we know not how many firesides, and form the mental nutriment of we know not how many youth. It is evident that literature as well as morals is concerned in

the overthrow of this system ; and we do not know how it can be better done, than by the diffusion, in a cheap form, of such works as will familiarize the minds of the people with higher notions of taste, and give them the desire to convert reading into a means of mental improvement instead of moral degradation. Such a publication as "Wiley and Putnam's Library" is calculated to aid in this work. We believe that in the numbers already published there is really more to interest and please common readers, than in the books they are now ignorantly devouring ; while, to the lover of literature, the collection recommends itself as containing choice books in the cheapest form consistent with elegance. Among these three of Hazlitt's works have appeared, — "Table Talk," "Lectures on the Reign of Elizabeth," and "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays."

Hazlitt was an acute but somewhat bitter observer of life and manners, and satirized rather than described them. Though bold and arrogant in the expression of his opinions, and continually provoking opposition by the hardihood of his paradoxes, he does not appear to have been influenced so much by self-esteem as sensibility. He was naturally shy and despairing of his own powers, and his dogmatism was of that turbulent kind which comes from passion and self-distrust. He had little repose of mind or manner, and in his works almost always appears as if his faculties had been stung and spurred into action. His life was vexed by many troubles, which rendered him impatient and irritable, prone to opposition, and inclined to take delight in the mere exercise of power, rather than to produce the effects for which alone power is valuable. Contempt and bitterness too often vitiate his notions of men and measures ; and his political writings especially often exhibit him as one who courts and defies opposition, and who is more desirous of making enemies than converts. He would often give the results of patient reasonings in headlong assertions, or paradoxical impertinences. In attacking ignorance and prejudice, he did not distinguish them from positive vices, but covered them with stinging sneers or rough contempt. If any one of his opinions was more heretical than another, he sought to enunciate it with a startling abruptness of expression, in order that it might give the more offence. There was bad temper in this, and it made him violent enemies, and subjected his character and writings to the most unscrupulous attacks.

The element in which Hazlitt's mind was most genially developed was literature. If he was lacking in love for actual human nature, or viewed men in too intolerant a spirit, his affections clustered none the less intensely around the "beings of the mind." His best friends and companions he found in poetry and romance. In the world of imagination he lived his most delightful days. As a critic, in spite of the acrimony and prejudice which occasionally dim his insight, he is admirable for acuteness, clearness, and force. His mind pierces and delves into his subject, rather than gracefully comprehends it; but his labors in the mine almost always bring out its riches. Where his sympathies were not perverted by personal feeling or individual association, where his mind could act uninfluenced by party spirit, his perceptions of truth and beauty were exquisite in their force and refinement. When he dogmatizes, his paradoxes evince a clear insight into one element of the truth, and serve as admirable stimulants to thought. His comments on passages of poetry or traits of character which have struck his own imagination forcibly are unrivalled for warmth of feeling and coloring. His criticism inspires the reader with a desire to peruse the works to which it refers. It is not often coldly analytical, but glows with enthusiasm and "noble rage." His style, though generally sharp and pointed, sometimes overflows with ornament and illustrations. Though many of his opinions are unsound, their unsoundness is hardly calculated to mislead the taste of the reader, from the ease with which it is perceived, and referred to its source in caprice or a momentary fit of spleen. He is a critic who can give delight and instruction, and infuse into his readers some of his own vehement enthusiasm for letters, without making them participants of his errors and passions.

Some of the most distinguished of Hazlitt's critical writings are, — "Lectures on the Comic Writers," "Spirit of the Age," "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays," "Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth," "Lectures on the English Poets," and "Criticisms on Art." These cover a wide ground, and are all more or less distinguished by his characteristic merits and faults. They all startle the reader from the self-complacency of his opinions, and provoke him into thinking. We extract from the "Characters of Shakspeare's Plays" — a work which contains much splendid

writing and fine delineation, and some failures — a passage on Coriolanus, in which Hazlitt's bitterness and strength of feeling are well displayed.

“Shakspeare has in this play shown himself well versed in history and state-affairs. Coriolanus is a store-house of political commonplaces. Any one who studies it may save himself the trouble of reading Burke’s *Reflections*, or Paine’s *Rights of Man*, or the Debates in both Houses of Parliament since the French Revolution or our own. The arguments for and against aristocracy or democracy, on the privileges of the few and the claims of the many, on liberty and slavery, power and the abuse of it, peace and war, are here very ably handled, with the spirit of a poet and the acuteness of a philosopher. Shakspeare himself seems to have had a leaning to the arbitrary side of the question, perhaps from some feeling of contempt for his own origin; and to have spared no occasion of baiting the rabble. What he says of them is very true: what he says of their betters is also very true, though he dwells less upon it. The cause of the people is indeed but ill calculated as a subject for poetry; it admits of rhetoric, which goes into argument and explanation, but it presents no immediate or distinct images to the mind, ‘no jutting frieze, buttress, or coigne of vantage’ for poetry ‘to make its pendant bed and procreant cradle in.’ The language of poetry naturally falls in with the language of power. The imagination is an exaggerating and exclusive faculty; it takes from one thing to add to another: it accumulates circumstances together to give the greatest possible effect to a favorite object. The understanding is a dividing and measuring faculty; it judges of things, not according to their immediate impression on the mind, but according to their relations to one another. The one is a monopolizing faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of present excitement by inequality and disproportion; the other is a distributive faculty, which seeks the greatest quantity of ultimate good, by justice and proportion. The one is an aristocratical, the other a republican faculty. The principle of poetry is a very anti-levelling principle. It aims at effect, it exists by contrast. It admits of no medium. It is every thing by excess. It rises above the ordinary standard of sufferings and crimes. It presents an imposing appearance. It shows its head turreted, crowned, and crested. Its front is gilt and blood-stained. Before it, ‘it carries noise, and behind it, it leaves tears.’ It has its altars and its victims, sacrifices, human sacrifices. Kings, priests, nobles, are its train-bearers; tyrants and slaves its executioners. ‘Carnage is its daughter.’ Poetry is right-royal. It puts the individual for the species, the

one above the infinite many, might before right. A lion hunting a flock of sheep, or a herd of wild asses, is a more poetical object than his prey; and we even take part with the lordly beast, because our vanity or some other feeling makes us disposed to place ourselves in the situation of the strongest party. So we feel some concern for the poor citizens of Rome when they meet together to compare their wants and grievances, till Coriolanus comes in, and with blows and big words drives this set of 'poor rats,' this rascal scum, to their homes and beggary, before him. There is nothing heroic in a multitude of miserable rogues not wishing to be starved, or complaining that they are like to be so; but when a single man comes forward to brave their cries, and to make them submit to the last indignities, from mere pride and self-will, our admiration of his prowess is immediately coupled with contempt for their pusillanimity. The insolence of power is stronger than the plea of necessity. The tame submission to usurped authority, or even the natural resistance to it, has nothing to excite or flatter the imagination; it is the assumption of a right to insult or oppress others, that carries an imposing air of superiority with it. We had rather be the oppressor than the oppressed.

"The love of power in ourselves, and the admiration of it in others, are both natural to man; the one makes him a tyrant, the other a slave. Wrong dressed out in pride, pomp, and circumstance, has more attraction than abstract right. Coriolanus complains of the fickleness of the people; yet the instant he cannot gratify his pride and obstinacy at their expense, he turns his arms against his country. If his country was not worth defending, why did he build his pride on its defence? He is a conqueror and a hero; he conquers other countries, and makes this a plea for enslaving his own; and when he is prevented from doing so, he leagues with its enemies to destroy his country. He rates the people "as if he were a God to punish, and not a man of their infirmity." He scoffs at one of their tribunes for maintaining their rights and franchises: 'Mark you his absolute *shall*?' not marking his own absolute *will* to take every thing from them; his impatience of the slightest opposition to his own pretensions being in proportion to their arrogance and absurdity. If the great and powerful had the beneficence and wisdom of gods, then all this would have been well: if with greater knowledge of what is good for the people, they had as great a care for their interest as they have for their own, if they were seated above the world, sympathizing with the welfare, but not feeling the passions of men, receiving neither good nor hurt from them, but bestowing their benefits as free gifts on them, they might

then rule over them like another Providence. But this is not the case. Coriolanus is unwilling that the senate should show their ‘cares’ for the people, lest their ‘cares’ should be construed into ‘fears,’ to the subversion of all due authority ; and he is no sooner disappointed in his schemes to deprive the people not only of the cares of the state, but of all power to redress themselves, than Volumnia is made madly to exclaim,

‘Now the red pestilence strike all trades in Rome,
And occupations perish.’”

Leigh Hunt is well known as the author of a large number of agreeable essays, and for his connection with many of his eminent contemporaries. He has been more a victim of criticism, than a critic. It has been truly said of him by Macaulay, “that there is no man living, whose merits have been more grudgingly allowed, and whose faults have been so cruelly expiated.” In his character there is such a union of pertness and kindness, that he is always open to attack. He made the public his confidant, poured into its ear his little frailties and fopperies, expressed his opinions on all subjects with the most artless self-conceit, and at times exhibited a kind of Richard Swiveller order of good feeling, in speaking of such men as Shelley and Byron. These follies, though most of them venial, made him a continual butt for magazine scribblers ; and the fine qualities of heart and intellect, which underlie his affectations, have not, until lately, been generally acknowledged. He is, in truth, one of the pleasantest writers of his time, — easy, colloquial, genial, humane, full of fine fancies and verbal niceties, possessing a loving if not a “learned spirit,” with hardly a spice of bitterness in his composition. He is an excellent commentator on the minute beauties of poetry. He has no grasp or acuteness of understanding, and his opinions are valueless where those qualities should be called into play ; but he has a natural taste, which detects with nice accuracy what is beautiful, and a power of jaunty expression, which conveys its intuitive decisions directly to other minds. He surveys poetry almost always from a luxurious point of view, and his criticism therefore is merely a transcript of the fine and warm sensations it has awakened in him. He is a sympathizing critic of words, sentences, and images, but has little success in explaining the grounds of his instinctive judgments, and is feeble and jejune in generalization. He

broods over a dainty bit of fancy or feeling, until he overflows with affection for it. He dandles a poetic image on his knee, as though it were a child, pats it lovingly on the back, and addresses to it all manner of dainty phrases ; and, consequently, he has much of the baby-talk, as well as the warm appreciation, which comes from affection. This billing and cooing is often distasteful, especially if it be employed on some passages which the reader desires to keep sacred from such handling ; and we cannot see him approaching a poet like Shelley, without a gesture of impatience ; but generally it is far from unpleasant. His “Imagination and Fancy” is a delightful book. “The Indicator” and “The Seer” are filled with essays of peculiar excellence. Hunt’s faults of style and thinking are ingrained, and cannot be weeded out by criticism. To get at what is really valuable in his writings, considerable toleration must be exercised towards his effeminacy of manner and daintiness of fancy. That, with all his faults, he has a mind of great delicacy and fulness, a fluent fancy, unrivalled good-will to the whole world, a pervading sweetness of feeling, and that he occasionally displays remarkable clearness of perception, must be cheerfully acknowledged by every reader of his essays.

In these hurried remarks on some of the essayists and critics of the time, we have not noticed two, who are well entitled to an extended consideration. We refer to Thomas Carlyle and John Stuart Mill. The influence of Carlyle on the whole tone of criticism at the present day has been powerfully felt. Mill is principally known on this side of the Atlantic by his work on Logic ; but he has been for a number of years a writer for the “Westminster Review,” over the signature of “A,” and his articles, especially his masterly disquisition on Jeremy Bentham, evince uncommon solidity, fairness, and reach of thought. These are worthy of a more elaborate review than our limits will now permit ; but we trust at some early period to repair the deficiency.